

DEPARTMENT OF CALIFORNIA HIGHWAY PATROL

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

COMMERCIAL VEHICLE THEFT PREVENTION IS CHP GOAL

The California Highway Patrol (CHP) is serious about all vehicle theft, and is placing special emphasis on commercial vehicle theft. "1,644 trucks and 4,517 commercial trailers were stolen in 1996," CHP Commissioner Dwight Helmick said. "Because of their high unit value these large trucks and trailers along with their cargo represent a tremendous financial loss for their owners as well as to society."

The CHP is highlighting the special theft risk of commercial vehicles to help truck drivers realize that they and their vehicles are targeted by thieves.

The commercial vehicle theft effort is part of a comprehensive CHP program of investigation and prosecution for automobile theft and fraud crimes. Legislation which went into effect in 1995 provides funding for the CHP's Cal H.E.A.T. Program (Californians' Help Eliminate Auto Theft) and designated the CHP Commissioner as the Statewide Vehicle Theft Investigation and Apprehension Coordinator.

People who observe suspicious activity involving vehicles, including commercial vehicles, can call a toll-free number the CHP has set up. "This number is not intended to be used to inform us of crimes in progress, or to report the theft of your vehicle," Helmick said. "But if you see activity related to vehicle theft, or know of a location where this activity is taking place, then calling 1-800-TELL-CHP can help us fight this crime.

"We have also prepared a suggested list of security measures for drivers of large commercial vehicles to help minimize their risk. Common sense and constant awareness will go a long way toward protecting their vehicles," Helmick added.

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SUGGESTED SECURITY MEASURES FOR TRUCK DRIVERS

1. Maintain regular communications with your dispatcher.
2. If equipped with radio, let dispatcher know of anything suspicious or odd.
3. Whenever possible, vary your route.
4. If rest stops are necessary, park in areas where other truckers are present. Hijackers don't like crowds.
5. Do not stop on dark freeways or in deserted areas while waiting to make deliveries.
6. Make it a point to stop only at reputable truck stops along your route. Don't stop at the same location every time.
7. If possible, drive in tandem to avoid being hijacked.
8. Whenever possible, go directly to your delivery point without making any stops. Don't take your load home or park in an unsecured area.
9. Be aware of vehicles that are following your truck and of strangers asking questions about your load.
10. Be suspicious of individuals making you stop as a result of an alleged traffic collision. If you are unsure whether a crash occurred, drive your rig to a police station or to a well-lit, busy location before stopping. Hijackers frequently will use this ruse to get drivers to stop.
11. Always lock your tractor doors and make sure all trailer and container doors are secured with a heavy-duty padlock. Keep your tractor windows rolled up until you are on the open road or freeway.
12. Be especially watchful immediately after picking up your load. The majority of armed hijackings occur within a few miles of the pickup point. Freeway on and off-ramps are particularly dangerous.
13. If you are hijacked or you find that your load has been stolen, immediately notify the local police agency (dial 911) and then your 24-hour dispatcher.
14. If you are hijacked, always and immediately do as instructed by hijackers, but also listen to what is being said and the sounds around you. It may provide law enforcement with valuable information on where the thieves have taken your vehicle and load.
15. Try to provide a description of suspect(s) and of vehicle(s) used by the suspects. You are law enforcement's best witness.
16. Carry information on your person concerning the identification of the tractor and trailer(s) or chassis and containers you are pulling (license numbers, container numbers, descriptions). Law enforcement can't report your rig stolen without this information.
17. Don't talk about your load on the CB radio. Cargo thieves can overhear your conversation.